



To be released on 1st September 2020

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION RELEASES:

STEP CLOSER – A WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY AWARENESS FILM

Observed on **10th September** every year, **World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD)** provides the opportunity for people, across the globe, to raise awareness of suicide and suicide prevention.

The WSPD theme, 'Working together to prevent suicide' aims to highlight that preventing suicide requires the efforts of many. **'Step Closer'** is a short film that builds on this with empathy and compassion around the physical metaphor that 'every step closer can connect someone to life'.

Every 40 seconds someone takes their life; that's almost 800,000 people a year around the world with over 75% of suicides occurring in low-and-middle-income countries. For each suicide approximately 135 people suffer intense grief or are otherwise affected, resulting in 108 million people annually being profoundly impacted by suicidal behaviours. For every suicide, an estimated 25 people make a suicide attempt and many more have serious thoughts of suicide.

The reduction of suicide mortality is of global imperative and forms part of the global commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal of reducing, by one third, premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases through prevention and treatment, and the promotion of mental health and well-being. Research shows multi-level approaches to suicide prevention, incorporating multiple interventions, to be effective. Collaboration at all levels is required; between government and stakeholders, funding bodies and organisations, NGOs and those that they serve, healthcare professionals and their patients, and persons at risk and their family, friends and co-workers.

We can all play a role, from reaching out to a friend or family member, to ensuring mental health and suicide prevention are included within Universal Health Coverage efforts, or by lobbying governments to undertake suicide prevention efforts and develop National Suicide Prevention Strategies. Joining together is critical for preventing suicide and 'Step Closer' is a film that aims to raise awareness around how, through working together, this could shift the balance and save lives.

As we adapt to a world altered by COVID-19 the message within 'Step Closer' becomes more pertinent as levels of isolation, distress and anxiety increase. Connections with others are vital in ensuring all individuals mental health and wellbeing.



David Harewood, MBE, British actor, BAFTA nominee and documentary maker, provided the voiceover for *Step Closer*. He said; **“The *Step Closer* film holds a strong, yet positive, message for World Suicide Prevention Day. As an advocate for mental health and suicide awareness, I was eager to be involved and to contribute to this initiative. Suicide is complex and this film seeks to empower discussions, reduce stigma and educate communities.”**

‘Step Closer’ will premiere online and on social media channels from September 1st 2020, 12pm UTC, and be disseminated throughout the period over World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10th and in the lead up to World Mental Health Day on October 10th 2020. For the full press toolkit, please email communications@iasp.info.

Step Closer

Voiceover: David Harewood

Script: Brian Cooper – Mutts & Misfits via Genie

Motion Design: Danny McGuinness – Play Function Studio via Genie

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World Suicide Prevention Day

World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) was first launched in 2003 by IASP with the endorsement of the World Health Organisation (WHO). As an official UN observed day, the 10th September each year has been designated as a way of focusing attention on the problems of suicide worldwide. Specific WSPD activities have taken place in over 70 countries with the purpose of raising awareness globally of suicidal behaviour.

The International Association for Suicide Prevention

The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) leads the global effort in suicide prevention having developed an effective forum that is proactive in creating strong collaborative partnerships and promoting evidence-based action in order to reduce the incidence of suicide and suicidal behaviour (www.iasp.info). Established in 1960, IASP is the largest international association dedicated to suicide prevention and to the alleviation of the effects of suicide and collaborates closely with relevant international organisations.

Important note:

Journalists reporting on this event are advised to include information on relevant help lines and websites. The following website provides details of Crisis Centres around the globe: https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres/.

